

September 18, 1923.

Remarks by the President to the Newspaper Correspondents.

I am not quite certain whether you have saved a half an hour this morning or lost half an hour. Generally the meeting of the Cabinet lasts until about one o'clock. Not always. We never know. Sometimes it takes two hours and sometimes not more than 20 minutes. I presume you know how a Cabinet meeting is held. The President sits at the head of the table and asks each member along down whether he has anything to present to the President or the Cabinet for consideration. Oftentimes you go clear down through the list and each one says "Not anything this morning." Of course that generally means rather a short Cabinet meeting. I am making this suggestion because the usual time of the news conference has been 1:00 o'clock instead of 12.00 o'clock. I don't know whether you want to continue that after daylight savings goes out or not. You take your choice about it and I will cooperate with you the best I can and come out as soon as I have finished my Cabinet meeting. If you want to have it go back to 1:00 o'clock so that we would be certain not to waste any time in waiting for me to come out, why set it at that our. You choose your own time about it.

Mr. President, I think the 12:00 o'clock hour always meant the Cabinet meeting began at 10:00 o'clock instead of 11:00 o'clock.

There hasn't been a 10:00 o'clock meeting since I have been in Washington. Well if you will have some representative of your press associations come in and consult with me, or with some of my Secretaries, you can fix that to suit yourselves and I will leave it that way.

An inquiry about the petition that came from California relative to executive clemency to political prisoners. I have that matter on my desk, having sent over to the Attorney General's office to get the files. No decision has been made yet about that.

I can't give you any outline now about the program for the Governor's Conference, As indicated the other day, I shall want to take up with them the various things they might be able to help out on, and we are working on some kind of a program.

An inquiry about the situation in Oklahoma. There have been no reports about that to the Federal Government that have come to my knowledge. I do not think there has been any. Nor is the Department of Justice, so far as I know, observing any developments there. My only information comes through the press reports, which seem to indicate that, at the present time, it is a local matter that is being handled by the Governor of Oklahoma.

An inquiry as to when the delegation of bankers of the 9th Federal Reserve District will come in. The date set for that is the 27th day of September.

Also an inquiry about the rehabilitation in Japan, as differentiated from immediate relief. There hasn't been any suggestion to me from any Japanese authority. It occurred to me, of course, as it did to everyone else, that our first thought was for the immediate relief of suffering there, and when that was disposed of, or contemporaneously with the disposition of it, it would be proper to take up the matter of refinancing, if necessary, the rebuilding of that part of Japan which was ruined by the earth quake.

† Whether I shall receive David Lloyd George, the former British premier. I certainly hope to receive him. I shouldn't think it would be possible for him to come to Washington without coming to see me.

Whether any figures have been presented as to a shortage of hard coal, and whether there is any possible justification for an increase in price. No figures have been made up. I do not suppose that a cessation of production from the first of September until, well, today is the 18th, for twenty days would, distributed over the seasons' output, really make any shortage in production. There is as I understand it always a slack time in the production of coal, both anthracite and bituminous, many days when the men in the mines are not employed. Now this loss will simply mean that there will be a greater opportunity for continuous employment, so that there wouldn't be any shortage on account of the cessation ~~of~~ from the first of September up to the present time. And there is another thing that is encouraging in that respect. And that is regarding the ability of the railroads at the present time to furnish cars. I recall last year when I was in the West, there was a great deal of discussion there as to whether the railroads were going to be able to furnish cars to move the fruit crops. Purchase of new equipment, and the expenditure on the part of the railroads of something like one billion and onehalf dollars has been made. The railroads this year, I think, have been ~~thoroughly~~ thoroughly equipped in all directions for the purpose of providing

cars, and I haven't seen any report any where of a shortage of cars on the railroads. That is a very encouraging feature of the present situation, which will be reflected of course, in their ability to move freight.

\* The Federal Trade Commission has had brought to its attention the matter of prices of coal, and I have had a letter from them saying that they would look at the reports of the Fuel Commission and the facts that they set forth, investigate the method of the distribution of coal for the purpose of ascertaining whether they can make suggestions that will reduce any possible waste that now exists in that operation.

\* An inquiry as to how I look on the suggested trip of to the north pole. I do not know that I can say much about that without a conference with the White House press association. I spoke to them for advice about that. I do suppose, though, seriously, that that is a great scientific undertaking, not only in relation to exploration, but in relation to the navigation of the air. And should it be successful, it would be one of the most remarkable of accomplishments.

The Cabinet took up and discussed this morning, particularly, the agricultural situation, and it developed there that the cotton situation is ~~not~~ fairly satisfactory. There is trouble in the South, of course, in certain sections, from the Boll Weevil, but, apparently, the general result of the cotton crop section for the present year will be to give them a larger money return than they had in pre-war times. The corn situation is also one that is fairly satisfactory. The price of corn is remarkably high and there isn't any real difficulty in that direction. The same is substantially true in relation to the animal industry, hogs and cattle. The encouraging thing about the raising of hogs is the very large number of them that there are on the farms. Of course, if the farmer has two hogs to sell instead of one, why he gets an additional income, even though the price isn't very much larger. The difficulty is particularly in the wheat belt and in that belt where there is oftentimes an insufficient rainfall. It makes the production of wheat cost more, and the production, per acre, of course, is not so large. There is a large production of wheat all over the world. Apparently, Europe will import about 200,000,000 bushels less of wheat this year than it has in preceding years.

We also discussed the effect that is produced by the prevailing rate of good liberal wages in the industries on the agricultural situation, and it was rather the opinion of those, who were best informed, that they had resulted in a very ~~far~~ much larger increase in the consumption of meat products. That is where there is a hopeful situation for the hog industry and the cattle industry, but it does not have a corresponding good effect on the wheat industry, because as the standard of living begins to go up and they eat more meat, apparently they eat less wheat. So that they are getting the benefit in one direction, but not the benefit in another. We don't know yet just what is going to be proposed in the way of a remedy. The Secretary of Agriculture is making a particular study of the wheat situation and expects to be able to report on that to me by Thursday or Friday of this week. When that report comes in, it will undoubtedly set out the facts that will enable us to make some determination of what kind of a remedy can be proposed. There is great anxiety and great desire to do everything that we can for the relief of any of the farmers who are in distress, along sound economic lines, relieving, a temporary situation perhaps, by trying to formulate a plan that will bring agriculture back on to a sound economic basis, so that we can have a balance of production. It may be that some of those that are raising wheat would do well to engage in the raising of some other kind of agricultural products. It may be that we ought to look about and see what it is that we are importing in the way of food products, and suggest that the wheat raisers, if they can, try to provide us here in America with some of those things that are being brought in. Sugar occurs to me right away as one of the things that we import to quite an extent, and probably shall for some years to come. It may be that those who are now raising wheat can profitably raise sugar beet or flax, and that we may be able to provide some remedy along that line. We also have in mind the possibility of some regional conferences. Some locality wants one thing done and another locality another thing, so that by regional conferences with the Secretary of Agriculture and perhaps by a representative of the Dept. of Commerce, for it is a commercial activity as well as an agricultural activity, we ~~can~~ must consider, that in that way we can furnish some needed relief.

I think that covers the situation fully.